

Message Text

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R 291543Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6162
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MOSCOW 20712

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: CH, UR, PEPR, TW
SUBJECT: THE USSR, THE TAIWAN OPTION AND SINO-U.S.
NORMALIZATION

REF: (A) STATE 189880, (B) MOSCOW 18745

1. FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY'S RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT'S
QUESTIONS POSED REF A. IT WAS PREPARED AFTER THE
DEPARTURE OF THE AMBASSADOR, WHO SHOULD BE SHOWN
THIS MESSAGE FOR HIS COMMENTS IN THE DEPARTMENT.

2. WE SEE FOUR SOVIET-HELD ASSUMPTIONS THAT WILL
HAVE AN IMPORTANT BEARING ON MOSCOW'S ASSESSMENT
OF TAIWAN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SINO-U.S.
NORMALIZATION PROCESS AND SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS:

(A) THAT THE U.S. AND THE PRC ARE MOVING TOWARD
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FULL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, AND THAT THIS PROCESS
WILL BE CAPPED SOONER OR LATER WITH A
DECISION ON THE TAIWAN PROBLEM AND THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF FULL SINO-U.S. DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. THE
SOVIETS BELIEVE TAIWAN IS A "MANAGEABLE" ISSUE IN
THE BROADER SCHEME OF CHINESE AND U.S. INTERESTS --
AN IMPEDIMENT BUT NOT A ROADBLOCK IN THE NORMALIZATION

PROCESS. IN SOVIET EYES, BOTH SIDES HAVE BIGGER FISH TO FRY. COMPETING WITH MOSCOW IS ONE OF THEM. A COMPROMISE ON THE TAIWAN ISSUE WOULD NOT COME AS A SURPRISE HERE; RATHER, IT WOULD BE ANOTHER AFFIRMATION OF THE GENERAL TREND -- AS WELL AS A MILESTONE -- IN SINO-U.S. RELATIONS;

(B) THAT PEKING WILL HAVE TO AGREE TO DE FACTO INDEPENDENCE FOR TAIWAN FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS THROUGH EITHER SOME FORM OF PRC ASSURANCE NOT TO ASSAULT THE ISLAND, OR A CONTINUING INFORMAL U.S. DEFENSE COMMITMENT, OR BOTH;

(C) THAT, BARRING MORE RADICAL SHIFTS IN THE POLITICAL-STRATEGIC SITUATION IN ASIA, MOSCOW WOULD HAVE MORE TO LOSE THAN TO GAIN IN FULLY EXERCISING THE "TAIWAN OPTION." THE SOVIETS WILL NOT WANT TO BURN THEIR BRIDGES WITH PEKING FOR THE RELATIVELY SLIM ECONOMIC-POLITICAL-MILITARY BENEFITS THAT COULD REALISTICALLY BE EXPECTED TO FLOW FROM A RELATIONSHIP WITH TAIWAN. THE SOVIETS STILL APPEAR TO BE BANKING ON A LESS HOSTILE ANTI-SOVIET POLICY EVOLVING IN CHINA OVER TIME, AND WOULD NOT LIKE TO RISK FORECLOSING THIS POSSIBILITY BY FULLY EXERCISING THE "TAIWAN OPTION." ALSO, THE SOVIETS REALIZE THAT THEY WOULD BE VULNERABLE TO CRITICISM
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BY ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH A REGIME MOSCOW HAS SO LONG CONDEMNED;

(D) THE SOVIET UNION HAS LITTLE INFLUENCE OVER HOW AND WHEN THE U.S. AND CHINA WILL RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCE OVER TAIWAN, JUST AS IT DID NOT HAVE THE MEANS TO STOP THE CONCLUSION OF THE PFT WITH THE ANTI-HEGEMONY CLAUSE.

3. WHAT IS THE "OFFICIAL" SOVIET POSITION? SOVIETS PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY REJECT THE "TWO-CHINA" THEORY. MOST RECENTLY, ON AUG. 10, SOVIET MFA FIRST FAR EAST DEPT. COUNSELOR ARKHAROV, WHILE POINTING OUT TO EMBOFF THAT THE SOVIET UNION MAINTAINS AN EMBASSY IN PEKING, HELD THAT MOSCOW WILL NOT RECOGNIZE TAIWAN.

4. NEVERTHELESS, THE SOVIETS MAY CONSIDER A "LIMITED TAIWAN OPTION" THROUGH TRADE OR OTHER TIES

WITH TAIWAN. REF B REPORTS A SENIOR SOVIET ASIAN

SPECIALIST AS ADVOCATING TRADE TIES WITH BOTH SEOUL AND TAIPEI AS RIPOSTES TO PEKING'S INCREASING ANTI-SOVIET DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY IN THE WORLD. A FORMER SOVIET DIPLOMAT, NOW DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF WORLD ECONOMY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (IMEMO), AND CHINA SPECIALIST, V. B. YAKUBOVSKIY, TOLD EMBOFF AUG. 11 THAT SOVIET POLICY-MAKERS HAVE OCCASIONALLY DEBATED THE MERITS OF

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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ESTABLISHING TRADE TIES WITH THE ROK AND TAIWAN. HE REMARKED THAT THE DEBATE HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY SERIOUS WITH RESPECT TO SEOUL, WHICH HAS ASKED THE USSR TO ESTABLISH TRADE TIES. YAKUBOVSKIY VOLUNTEERED THAT TAIPEI HAS NEVER MADE A SIMILAR REQUEST.

5. WHAT ADVANTAGE WOULD THE SOVIETS SEE IN ESTABLISHING TRADE TIES WITH TAIWAN? SINCE MANY COUNTRIES HAVE TRADE WITH TAIWAN AND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE PRC, THE SOVIETS MAY ASSUME (EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT JUST "ANY" COUNTRY) THAT PEKING WILL NOT BREAK DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IF MOSCOW PUTS ITSELF INTO THIS SAME CATEGORY -- PARTICULARLY IF THE SOVIETS MOVE NON-DRAMATICALLY

IN ESTABLISHING A LOW-LEVEL OF TRADE. MOSCOW
COULD SEE LIMITED TIES WITH TAIWAN AS ONE OF ITS
"COUNTER-PUNCHES" TO EFFORTS BY PEKING TO UNDERMINE
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SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AREAS CLOSE TO SOVIET BORDERS
LIKE EASTERN EUROPE AND JAPAN. AND TRADE TIES
COULD ALWAYS BE BROKEN OFF IN THE FUTURE IF NEEDED
AS A BARGAINING CHIP IN A FUTURE RECONCILIATION
WITH PEKING. ALTHOUGH POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS
WOULD BE OVERRIDING, THE SOVIETS MAY ALSO SEE SOME
ECONOMIC BENEFITS FROM TRADE WITH TAIWAN.

6. WE DO NOT KNOW IF MOSCOW WOULD VIEW SINO-U.S. RESOLU-
TION OF THE TAIWAN PROBLEM AND FULL NORMALIZATION OF SINO-
U.S. RELATIONS IN ITSELF AS NECESSARILY CREATING A MORE
FAVORABLE CLIMATE FOR EXERCISING A "LIMITED TAIWAN OPTION."
THE MOTIVATIONS SUGGESTED PARA 5 AND A ROK-TYPE INITIATIVE
FOR TRADE TIES FROM TAIPEI COULD PROVOKE SOVIET MOVEMENT
IN THIS DIRECTION EVEN BEFORE "FULL" SINO-U.S. NORMALIZA-
TION. HOWEVER, THE SOVIETS MIGHT BE LESS CONCERNED ABOUT
RETALIATION BY PEKING AFTER THE U.S. HAD OPENED AN
EMBASSY IN PEKING WHILE MAINTAINING U.S. TRADE WITH TAIWAN.

7. WHAT WOULD MOSCOW'S COURSE ACTION BE IF AND
WHEN IT GETS ITS FOOT INTO THE TAIWAN DOOR? THIS WOULD
DEPEND ON A LARGE NUMBER OF UNKNOWNNS, INCLUDING THE
RECEPTIVITY OF THE TAIWAN GOVERNMENT; THE PRC REACTION; AND
INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS ON TAIWAN ITSELF. IT WOULD BE MUCH
EASIER, FOR EXAMPLE, FOR THE SOVIET UNION TO DEAL WITH A
TAIWAN THAT CONSIDERED ITSELF AN "INDEPENDENT" STATE RATHER
THAN A PART OF CHINA. (DR. V. PETROV OF THE FAR EAST
INSTITUTE TOLD VISITING AMERICAN SCHOLAR SELIG HARRISON
LAST WEEK THAT TAIWAN'T POSITION WOULD BE MUCH BETTER TODAY
IF IT WOULD HAVE DECLARED ITS "INDEPENDENCE" TEN YEARS AGO.
EVEN THEN, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THE SOVIETS WOULD BE EVER
MINDFUL OF THE POTENTIALLY GREAT COSTS INVOLVED IN SINO-
SOVIET RELATIONS IN PROVOKING PEKING OVER TAIWAN, PARTIC-
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ULARLY GIVEN THE RELATIVELY MARGINAL BENEFITS SOVIET-TAIWAN
TIES WOULD BRING.

8. AS MENTIONED BY A SENIOR ASIAN SPECIALIST (REF B), THE
SOVIET REACTION TO FULL NORMALIZATION OF SINO-U.S.
RELATIONS WOULD PROBABLY DEPEND ON THE FORM NORMALIZATION

WOULD TAKE. THE SOVIETS ARE ALREADY GENUINELY DISTURBED OVER PEKING'S RECENT SUCCESSES IN CONCLUDING THE SINO-JAPANESE PFT AND HUA KUO-FENG'S RECEPTION IN BUCHAREST AND BELGRADE. HUA'S PLANNED VISIT TO WESTERN EUROPE PLUS POSSIBLE ANNOUNCEMENTS ON WESTERN EUROPEAN ARMS AND MILITARY TECHNOLOGY SALES TO THE PRC AND POSSIBLE JAPANESE CONTRIBUTIONS TO MODERNIZATION OF THE PRC ECONOMIC INFRA-STRUCTURE (STEEL, TRANSPORTATION, ENERGY DEVELOPMENT) WHICH MAY FOLLOW KOMOTO VISIT WILL CERTAINLY FEED SOVIET SUSPICIONS AND FEARS THAT AN ANTI-SOVIET, POLITICAL-MILITARY, US-EUROPEAN-PRC-JAPANESE CONDOMINIUM IS IN THE MAKING. THE SOVIETS APPARENTLY STILL HOPE THE US WILL NOT DOWNGRADE SOVIET-U.S. RELATIONS AS IT MOVES TOWARD FULL NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. THIS SOVIET PERSPECTIVE WOULD BE SHAKEN IF THE US DECISIVELY JOINED WITH CHINA IN GIVING THE SINO-SOVIET NORMALIZATION PROCESS OVERTLY ANTI-SOVIET OVERTONES, ESPECIALLY IF THE PROCESS INCLUDED A US CONTRIBUTION TO BUILDING UP THE PRC'S MILITARY POTENTIAL. SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES COULD CONCEIVABLY PRODUCE AN INCREASED SOVIET CONCENTRATION ON MILITARY PREPAREDNESS AND FURTHER STRAINS IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS. CONVERSELY, A MORE CAUTIOUS AND LOW PROFILE SINO-U.S. NORMALIZATION PROCESS, COUPLED WITH CONTINUED SOVIET-U.S. INTERACTION IN THE POLITICAL AND ARMS CONTROL AREAS, WOULD LESSEN THE PROBABILITY OF SOVIET OVER-REACTION, KEEP THE US OUT OF THE SINO-SOVIET CROSSFIRE, WHILE MAINTAINING US ADVANTAGE OF BEING THE ONLY MEMBER OF THE

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AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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SINO-SOVIET-US TRIANGLE TO ENJOY GOOD WORKING RELATIONS
WITH THE OTHER TWO MEMBERS. GARRISON

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